

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4402

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February 18, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

I am very concerned to learn that the Interior Department has drafted a list of places in Utah that could become National Monuments.

Given the lingering frustration felt by many Utahns, following the 1996 "stroke of the pen" monument designation, I feel it is totally inappropriate for this federal agency to even have preliminary discussions without involving the stakeholders on the ground. At a minimum, this recent development only serves to stir up emotions about the lack of a public process. We should not handle public lands discussions in this manner.

It is entirely appropriate to have public hearings and discussions about public lands, but it is critical that the Interior Department participates in a fair process that provides for public participation for all stakeholders. I speak from personal experience – the successful passage of the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act, signed into law last year, proves that contentious public lands issues are best resolved using a collaborative approach. The model that Senator Bennett and I followed for this legislation produced a result that received broad local support from a diverse group of stakeholders. Our deliberative process went a long way towards lessening the mistrust many residents have regarding the federal government's plans.

The Department's approach is the wrong way to go about making public lands policy. I urge you to dismiss it in favor of a "bottom up", not a "top down" process. I hope to hear that you stand ready to work with representatives from my state—in a bipartisan way—to address lands issues in Utah.

Sincerely,



JIM MATHESON
Member of Congress

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